

Friends Meeting House, Ifield

7 Langley Lane, Ifield, Crawley, West Sussex, RH11 0NB

National Grid Reference: TQ 25244 37910



Statement of Significance

The meeting house, dating from 1675-76, is one of the earliest purpose-built meeting houses in England. It is attached to a house of c.1475. The complex also includes a burial ground, a well and an eighteenth-century mounting block. Overall, the building has exceptional heritage significance.

Evidential value

The little altered meeting house has the potential to reveal further evidence about the past, as demonstrated by the recently discovered concealed shoe in a wall. It has exceptional evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house is one of the earliest purpose-built meeting houses in England. It has associations with William Penn, George Fox and Elizabeth Fry. It has exceptional historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building was built using local stone (reputedly from Slaugham Place) and a high-quality design with 'polite' features such as quoins. It has exceptional aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building has high communal value as a Quaker meeting house, which is also used by the local community and whose attics are leased to a housing association.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *West Weald*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0001740*

1.3 Owner: *Friends Trusts*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Crawley Borough Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*

1.6 Civil parish: *Crawley NPA*

1.7 Listed status: *I*

1.8 NHLE: *1298879*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Ifield Village*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1675-76*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *10 September 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Barbara Kershaw*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Cottage ('the Old Forge'), mounting block, Camfield, Long Room*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 606-7

Lidbetter, H., *The Friends Meeting House*, 1979, pp. 14, 31, fig. 37 (plan), plates 53 and 54

Nairn, I. and N. Pevsner, *Sussex (Buildings of England)*, 1965, p. 207

Hughes, A.F., 'Meeting House & Meeting House Cottage, Ifield. An evaluation of historic structures', 2009

Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in Eastern England*, 2002, pp. 339-40

Warner, R., *The story of Camfield, 1967-1996*, 1996

B.R., 'A short history of Ifield Meeting from 1655 to the growth of Crawley New Town', leaflet
Local meeting survey by Norman Birch, June 2015

Part 2: The Meeting House & Burial Ground: history, contents, use, setting and designation

2.1. Historical background

The meeting at Ifield traces its origins to a meeting held in 1655 by George Fox and Alexander Parker at Richard Bonwicke's house. On 24 June 1674, the leasehold of the site of a house known as Clerksham was bought from the blacksmith and Quaker Robert Robinson for £60. This was the hall house now known as the 'Old Forge' which was built in c.1475 (photo bottom left). The site also had a blacksmith's shop, a garden and an orchard. The burial ground is said to have been used first in 1659, which predates the acquisition of the site. The meeting house was built just beside the house in 1675-6 at a cost of £250. The stone is said to have come from Slaugham Place (built between 1570 and 1610) although it is not clear if this was in sufficient disrepair in the 1670s for materials to be sold off. William Penn is known to have visited the meeting house for monthly business meetings and to preach.

In 1822, a shuttered partition was installed to create a separate room for the women's business meeting. (They may have met previously in the cottage.) In 1837, Elizabeth Fry visited the meeting. In 1953, a piece of land was compulsory purchased by the Crawley Development Corporation. In 1954, Friends acquired the freehold of the remainder of the site. The same year, repairs were made to the roof timbers and the panelling with financial assistance from the Historic Churches Preservation Fund. In 1960-2, Hubert Lidbetter made improvements for £3,000 (which may have included the rear extension marked with '1957' on Butler's plan (figure 1)). In 1970, the Crawley Friends Housing Association leased land to build a residential centre to provide accommodation for 'the lonely' of the nearby Crawley New Town. The building (completed in 1971) was named 'Camfield' after a local Quaker family. The architects were Graham Christopher, Ernest Chew and A.J. Morley. At the same time, the attic rooms in the meeting house were converted into flats to be used in conjunction with Camfield. (Camfield now provides accommodation for single people in need.)

In 2010, the kitchen was enlarged, and an accessible toilet installed. In recent years, there have been several repair campaigns, including of the roof and the south elevation. At the time of the visit, repairs were under way to the ceiling of the meeting room (damaged by a leak), and the window lintels of the north elevation. The timber-framed west wall will be repaired in 2016.

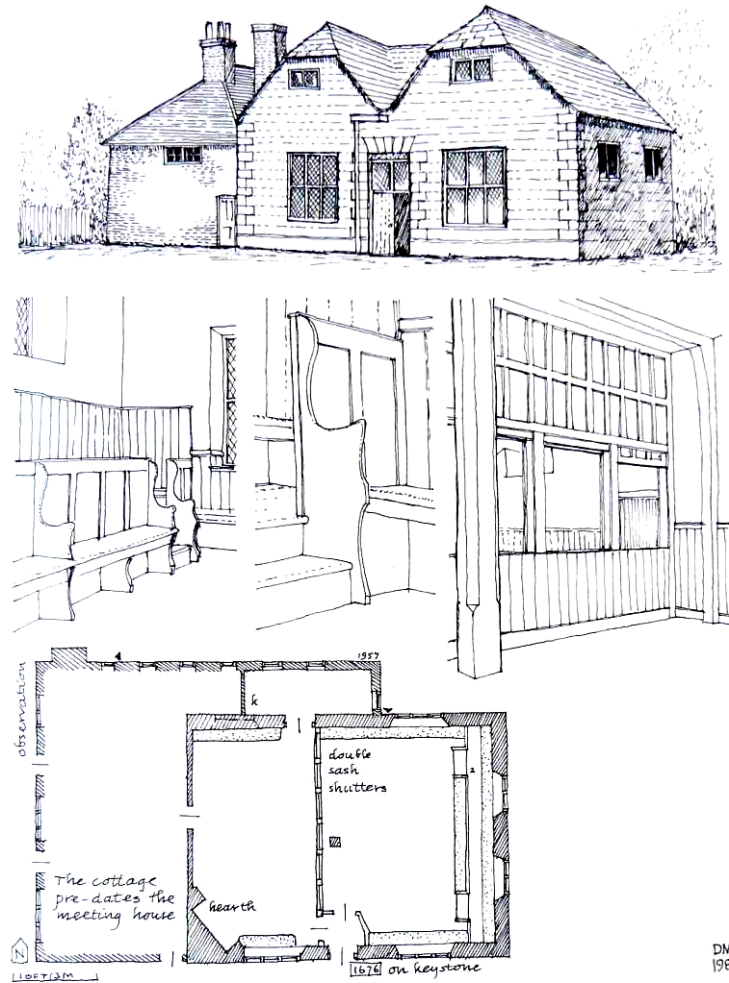


Figure 1: External perspective, interior details and plan (northeast is to the right; not to scale)
(Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, p. 607)

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house has an oblong plan. The main elevation faces southeast. The walls are of squared and tooled Sussex stone, with a roof of Horsham stone. There are two half-hipped gables each to the south and north, with a brick chimneystack at the southwest. A chamfered plinth runs around the building. The south elevation has rusticated quoins to the corners and around the entrance. The lintel of the entrance door is inscribed '1676', while some of the right-hand quoins have inscriptions thought to note the admission of new members: '16 HE 84', '16 AH 78', and '16 IK 76'. All windows have flat-arched heads. The leaded windows on either side of the entrance are of three lights with timber transoms. Above them, in the gables, are small two-light leaded windows. Below the valley between the two gables is a lead hopper decorated with oak leaves. The side (northeast) elevation has two small high-level windows, leaded and of two lights each. The rear (northwest) elevation is similar to the front with one large window. The off-centre rear entrance (with a divided, nail-studded door with a shelf) is now an internal door inside the lean-to brick extension of 1957.

The interior is divided into two spaces by a timber screen of 1822 with sash shutters (photo centre left). The space formerly used for the women's business meeting (now the library) is to the left (west), while the men's meeting room (now the meeting room) is to the east. Both rooms have unpainted dado panelling, timber floors and fixed benches against the walls. The west room has a corner fireplace and a timber-framed west wall (photo centre right). (A

concealed shoe was recently found in the west wall.) A large chamfered post with ogee-braces in the meeting room supports the ceiling (photo centre left). The elders' and ministers' stand on a dais is against the northeast wall of the meeting room. The rear extension contains a kitchen; toilets are in a lean-to rear extension behind the cottage which is internally connected to the kitchen. The attic rooms are leased to Crawley Friends Housing Association and were not inspected.

2.3 Loose furnishings

At the time of the visit, all the furnishings were covered up due to the repair works. They reportedly include several fixed benches, as well as loose open-backed benches. The latter and the stand date from the early nineteenth century (Stell). An oak table and chair dating from the seventeenth century were reputedly the gift of George Fox.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground is located to the east of the meeting house. It contains about 56 headstones of the form typical for Quaker burial grounds, dating from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is now closed (apart from the burial of ashes). Notable people buried here include Sarah Robinson who set up the first free school in Crawley in 1852 and the Cheal family who were famous nurserymen. There is also a row of plaques commemorating the burial of ashes.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house and the attached cottage are set back from the road. The medieval hall-house to the west of the meeting house (listed as 'Meeting House Cottage', now known as 'the Old Forge') is a two-storey house (photo bottom left). Behind the meeting house and attached to the rear of the cottage is the 1970s hostel called Camfield. The burial ground is located to the east of the meeting house. In front (south) of the meeting house is the eighteenth-century mounting block of brick and stone (photo bottom right). A historic well (with modern timber cover and winch) is south of the mounting block. Towards the road is an L-shaped single-storey building known as The Long Room. This was formerly stables and a coach house; the open bays of the coach house have been filled with brick. The groups of buildings make a positive contribution to the conservation area.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house (grade I), the cottage (II*) and the mounting block (II) are correctly listed. The list entry of the meeting house contains several typographical errors. The entry for the cottage needs to be amended to remove reference to its former use as warden's cottage.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site has high archaeological potential due to the presence of burials and the medieval hall house.

Part 6: List description(s)

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1298879

Location

FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, LANGLEY LANE

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
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West Sussex	Crawley	District Authority	
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Grade: I

Date first listed: 21-Jun-1948

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 363371

List entry Description

Details

LANGLEY LANE 1. 5403 Ifield Friends' Meeting House TQ 23 NE 3/49 21.6.48 I GV 2. Dated 1676 and built as the bequest of Robert Robinson the local blacksmith (No 5 Langley Lane g.v.). Built of Sussex stone, squared and tooled and thought to have been brought from Slaugham Place. Roof of Horsham stone slates. The main front facing the lane has 2 wide gables with half hips and a central doorway with rusticated quoins and lintel bearing the date 1676 on its keystone. Two large windows are on each side of the entrance, divided into 6 lights by 2 wood mullioned and transomed leaded panes. Two smaller windows above, are under each gable hip. On the right hand quoins of the entrance doorway the following dates and initials are cut: 16 NE 84, 16 AH 78, 16 HK 76, probably recording the admissions of new members. North front similar to south but doorway not central and only one large window. The interior was C18 benches and panelling of untreated pine. The building has associations with William Penn, who lived at nearby Warminghurst before he left for America; and with George Fox and Elizabeth Fry. Burial ground in enclosure to east. For early history of the Ifield Meeting see S A C XVI pages 70-71. This is one of the earliest purpose-built meeting houses still existing.

Listing NGR: TQ2524637898

Cottage ('The Old Forge')

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: MEETING HOUSE COTTAGE

List entry Number: 1207683

Location

MEETING HOUSE COTTAGE, 5, LANGLEY LANE

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
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West Sussex	Crawley	District Authority	
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Grade: II*

Date first listed: 21-Jun-1948

Date of most recent amendment: 23-Feb-1983

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 363369

List entry Description

Details

LANGLEY LANE 1. Ifield 5403 No 5 (Meeting House Cottage) (formerly listed as house adjoining Friends' Meeting House) TQ 23 NE 3/48 21.6.48 II* GV 2. Meeting House Cottage is a timber-framed 3 bay open hall house of circa 1475. It is of 2 storeys, the west side having a brick-faced lower storey and tile-hung upper storey. South end faced in brick in C18. Old tiled roof hipped at south end and at north end hipped and carried down in long sweep over outshot. Windows are leaded casements. The interior has 2 crown posts and a C16 inserted ceiling. On 24 June 1674 the local blacksmith Robert Robinson who lived in the house, and was a Quaker conveyed the house, shop, garden, orchard and about 4 acres of land to a group of Friends for the sum of £60, in trust for the meeting. This resulted in the adjoining Friends Meeting House. Meeting House Cottage is now the warden's cottage for the Meeting House.

Listing NGR: TQ2524637898

Mounting block

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: MOUNTING BLOCK IN FORECOURT OF FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1207719

Location

MOUNTING BLOCK IN FORECOURT OF FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, LANGLEY LANE

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
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West Sussex	Crawley	District Authority	
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Grade: II

Date first listed: 23-Feb-1983

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 363372

List entry Description

Details

LANGLEY LANE 1. 5403 Ifield Mounting block in forecourt of Friends' Meeting House TQ 23 NE 3/50 II 2. C18. Brick built mounting block with stone treads. Three steps. The interior is hollow and there is a stone lintel on the outside.

Listing NGR: TQ2525637904